



PROJECT REPORT

Dermatitis Control in Hairdressing and Catering sectors

January - February 2008

Summary

The aim of this project was to raise awareness in hairdressing and catering businesses of the dangers of work-related contact dermatitis (WRCD) and to advise on workable solutions. 20 visits to catering premises were made and talks were given to hairdressing students at Chichester College. Most staff and employers appeared to understand the issues, however often there was not a willingness to adopt new more appropriate working practices.

Method

Visits were made to catering premises solely to discuss WRCD control. A standard letter was given out which explained briefly the issues and requested a review of safety procedures to ensure that :

1. A suitably competent trained person is appointed to carry out **COSHH Assessments**. Where 5 or more staff are employed these are required to be documented.
2. A suitably competent trained person is appointed to carry out **staff skin condition checks** and look for signs of dermatitis.
3. Staff are instruct, inform and supervise as appropriate.

On the back of the letter was listed examples of dermatitis control measures for caterers. A copy of the excellent illustrated HSE leaflet INDG 233 "Preventing contact dermatitis at work" was given out. A WRCD topic inspection form was used to capture findings and record an assessment of businesses against the relevant risk control indicators.

Two half hour talks were given to a total of 150 hairdressing and beauty treatment students at Chichester College. An HSE presentation on this topic was downloaded from the HSE HElEx extranet website and adapted to suit the occasion.

Findings

1. Most proprietors were positive about the project and recognised dermatitis can be a problem for caterers.
2. Few companies had suitable COSHH assessments.
3. Few businesses provided moisturisers for use by staff. Often a suitable soft paper towel was not available.
4. Most businesses were not carrying out staff skin checks but agreed to do so in the future.
5. Several businesses said they had had staff who had suffered WRCD.

Resources

The equivalent of one month of an inspector's time was spent on this project.

Conclusions and opportunities for further action

1. As with many occupational health issues, it is difficult to be sure what controls are being actually followed by businesses. It is difficult to know how much lasting effect this project has had. It would be useful if a way could be found to increase reporting via General Medical Practitioners. Prosecutions following investigation of serious dermatitis incidents might focus the mind of employers on the need to take action.

2. The HSE posters, leaflets and power point presentation on this topic are most helpful.
3. Giving a talk to the hairdressing and beauty treatment students was a most effective way of getting the message across.

Report by David Gibson, Senior Environmental Health Officer, 2 May 2008

Approved by Ian Brightmore, Environmental Health Manager, 9 May 2008

References

1. HELA LAC 15/3 – Preventing dermatitis: Intervention in the hair and beauty industry.
2. HELA LAC 15/2 – Inspection intervention 2007/8: Preventing work-related contact dermatitis in the catering industry.
3. HSE Topic inspection pack: “Work-related contact dermatitis”. Version 3 – May 2007.
4. HSE “Occupational contact dermatitis – Management standards and guidance for employers”.
5. HSE leaflet INDG 233 “Preventing contact dermatitis at work”